


THE HAND OF

FATE

DEC.
10c

ACE



MIDNIGHT! MASKS OFF! EEEK!
WHAT KIND OF A MASQUERADE PARTY
IS THIS? THOSE HORRIBLE, EVIL
MASKS ARE EXACTLY LIKE
THEIR REAL FACES!

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DEAD RINGER

MR. VICTOR MURRAIN AND MR. HUBERT NEWTON, THE STEWARDESS AND I WERE JUST NOTICING HOW MUCH YOU TWO MEN LOOK ALIKE!

(I NOTICED IT MYSELF---AND SO DID MR. NEWTON. BUT WE COME FROM DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD!)



ON A COLD AND FOGGY NIGHT IN NOVEMBER, A GROUP OF PEOPLE STOOD AT LA GUARDIA FIELD AWAITING THE DECISION OF THE OFFICIALS CONCERNING THE SCHEDULED NEW YORK-PARIS FLIGHT. HUBERT NEWTON AND VIC MURRAIN HAD NEVER SEEN EACH OTHER UNTIL A FEW MOMENTS BEFORE, AND NEITHER OF THEM WAS AWARE THAT THE MYSTERIOUS FIGURE OF FATE STOOD CLOSE BESIDE THEM.

HE'S ONE OF THOSE GUYS WHO ALWAYS GETS THE BREAKS! HE'S ON HIS WAY TO FRANCE TO CLAIM A TITLE, A CASTLE AND A FORTUNE! BUT I'M ON MY WAY TO WORK LIKE A DOG IN A LOUSY FRENCH NIGHTCLUB!

WELL, GENTLEMEN, IT IS SAFE TO TAKE OFF NOW -- SO TAKE YOUR PLACES!

THE SPAN OF LIFE HAS RUN OUT FOR ALL BUT HUBERT NEWTON. HE WHO THINKS HE NEVER GETS THE BREAKS!

SO BE IT!



DEATH AND I TOOK OUR PLACES AT THE CONTROLS AS THE PLANE ROSE ABOVE THE FOG. AND THE PASSENGERS SETTLED DOWN. IT WAS JUST AS WELL THEY DID NOT KNOW WHAT LAY AHEAD, OR WHO SAT AT THE CONTROLS.

GUYS LIKE YOU ARE JUST BORN. LUCKY! THERE'S NOT A CHANCE OF ANYBODY DYING AND LEAVING ME THAT KIND OF VELVET!



I DON'T EXPECT ANYTHING LIKE THIS TO EVER HAPPEN TO ME, EITHER. I WAS DOING ALL RIGHT. I'D WORKED MY WAY UP IN THE FIGHT GAME. I'D FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT MY OLD MAN COMING FROM FRANCE!



I'D NEVER PAID MUCH ATTENTION TO HIS TALK OF THE TITLE THE FAMILY HAD BEFORE THE FRENCH REVOLUTION. MY FATHER WAS THE BLACK SHEEP, AND HAD RUN AWAY FROM HOME. BUT ACCORDING TO THE LETTER I GOT-- I'M THE LAST OF THE DE MURRAIN S. MY UNCLE DIED AND LEFT THE WHOLE WORKS TO ME!



MEANWHILE...

BELOW IS THE COAST OF FRANCE!

THIS WAS THE DESTINATION DECREED-- THE END OF THE TRIP FOR ALL BUT ONE!



THEN, A TREMENDOUS EXPLOSION! --THE PLANE PLUMMETED THROUGH THE AIR TOWARD THE WAVES AND ROCKS.



THE POWER OF FATE TRANSCENDS ALL THE PHYSICAL LAWS OF THE UNIVERSE, HUBERT. EACH MAN IS ASSIGNED A PAGE IN THE BOOK OF FATE. UPON THIS PAGE THE FINGER OF ETERNITY HAS WRITTEN THAT WHICH IS TO BE. IT WAS WRITTEN UPON YOUR PAGE THAT YOU WOULD NOT DIE IN THIS CRASH!



THE WRECKAGE OF THE PLANE AND SOME OF THE BODIES WERE WASHED UP ON A ROCKY BEACH ON THE COAST OF FRANCE.

VIC MURRAIN--OR COUNT VICTOR DE MURRAIN--AND HUBERT NEWTON. SO MUCH ALIKE. AND YET YOUR DESTINIES WERE QUITE DIFFERENT! IN SPITE OF YOUR BELIEF THAT YOU NEVER GET THE BREAKS, HUBERT, TO EACH IS APPOINTED HIS SHARE OF GOOD AND EVIL--ALTHOUGH EACH MAY INCREASE THE EVIL IN HIS LIFE BY HIS OWN FOLLY, AS YOU HAVE OFTEN DONE.



W-WHAT HAPPENED?

THE PLANE--THAT EXPLOSION/
THIS-- THIS IS THE GUY THAT
WAS GOING TO GET ALL THAT
DOUGH AND A TITLE! HE--
HE'S DEAD!



THAT COULD BE ME LYING IN
--AND SO COULD THIS PASSPORT
PICTURE/ BUT WHY NOT/ IT'S
TIME I GOT A BREAK/ WHO'D
KNOW THE DIFFERENCE? I'LL
NEVER BE ANYTHING BUT A
SECOND-RATE NIGHTCLUB SINGER,
BUT WITH THESE PAPERS--WHY,
I CAN BE COUNT VICTOR De
MURRAIN AND LIVE LIKE A
KING!



ALL I HAVE TO DO IS PUT MY
STUFF IN HIS POCKETS AND TAKE
HIS THINGS/ WHO'S GOING TO CARE
IF HUBERT NEWTON IS REPORTED
KILLED IN A CRASH/ THIS IS THE
FIRST STROKE OF LUCK
I'VE EVER HAD!



YOU WERE GIVEN AN IDENTITY AND A DESTINY
OF YOUR OWN, HUBERT! YOU MAY NOT ASSUME
OR STEAL THOSE THINGS ASSIGNED TO
ANOTHER!



WHO ARE YOU? HOW
DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?

I CARRY OUT THE UNCHANGEABLE DECISIONS OF
ALL THAT IS TO BE. PERHAPS YOU CALL ME FATE.
I KNOW YOUR NAME BECAUSE IT IS WRITTEN IN
MY BOOK. AND YOUR
NAME IS NOT VIC
MURRAIN!



LOOK, GUY-- I'M NOT IN A
MOOD TO PLAY GAMES. I DON'T
KNOW WHY YOU'RE SNOOPING
AROUND HERE AND HANDING OUT
THAT LINE-- BUT I SAY MY
NAME IS VIC MURRAIN!

AND JUST IN CASE
YOU WANT TO
MAKE SOMETHING
OF IT...OOOPPPS.



YOU, WHO COMPLAIN OF
BAD BREAKS, SHOULD BE
HAPPY AND GRATEFUL THAT
YOU WERE SPARED-- THAT
YOUR LIFE IS AHEAD --
AND SUCCESS, TOO, IF YOU
WORK FOR IT/ VIC MURRAIN
CAN NEVER AGAIN ENJOY
LIFE AND LIVING. HE
IS DEAD!

THERE'S THE
WRECKAGE OF THE
PLANE WE SAW
FALL/ BUT LOOK/
IT'S A MIRACLE/
A MAN
SURVIVES!



I-- I MUST STILL BE GROGGY /
FATE/ WHAT KIND OF DOPEY STUFF
IS THAT/ HA/ HERE COME THE
RESCUERS/ GLAD I GOT THE
STUFF SWITCHED IN TIME. COUNT
VICTOR De MURRAIN. THAT'S ME!

FOOL/ I TRIED TO
WARN YOU/ IF YOU DO
THIS THING YOU WILL
REGRET IT.



I TRIED TO WARN HIM, BUT HE WENT HIS HEEDLESS, GREEDY WAY. A FEW WEEKS LATER IN MAURIENNE, AN ISOLATED SECTION OF SOUTHERN FRANCE, HE GOT HIS FIRST VIEW OF MURRAIN CASTLE...

WHAT A LIFE! NOBODY QUESTIONED ME AT ALL IN PARIS. THEY ACCEPTED THE LETTERS AND PAPERS I TOOK FROM VIC'S BODY!



THEY TURNED THE DeMURRAIN BANK ACCOUNT OVER TO ME. I BOUGHT THIS CAR, SWELL CLOTHES, HAD A GOOD TIME---AND NOW I'M READY TO TAKE A LOOK AT MY CASTLE. LOOKS KIND OF CREEPY AROUND HERE THOUGH. I DON'T THINK I'LL STAY LONG. WITH THE DOUGH I'VE GOT NOW, IT'S THE BRIGHT SPOTS FOR ME!

YOU'VE MADE A BAD BARGAIN, HUBERT.... AS YOU WILL SOON SEE.



HUBERT REACHED THE CASTLE AND RANG THE ANCIENT BELLS. AN OLD BUTLER OPENED THE DOOR.

YOU'LL HAVE TO STEP AROUND HERE LIVELIER THAN THAT OR YOU'LL BE THROWN OUT ON YOUR EAR! I'M COUNT VICTOR De MURRAIN / I OWN THIS DUMP...AND I EXPECT SOME SNAPPY SERVICE!

WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU, SIR!



AS HUBERT STEPPED INTO THE HALL...

THE SERVANTS ARE ALL LINED UP TO GREET THE NEW COUNT, SIR. AND THE FAMILY ARE WAITING IN THE DRAWING ROOM. THEY ARE HAVING A PARTY IN YOUR HONOR, SIR.

EOOWWWW! WHAT KIND OF GAME IS THIS? UGH!



THEY'RE STINKING, ROTTEN CORPSES! I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE!

OH, NO, SIR! YOU MUSTN'T LEAVE US! COUNT De MURRAIN BELONGS IN THE MURRAIN CASTLE! HEH/HEH!



GET OUT OF MY WAY, CREEP! I'M LEAVING!



AS HUBERT'S FIST HIT THE BONY CHIN OF THE CREATURE, IT WAS AS THOUGH AN ELECTRIC SHOCK WENT THROUGH HIS BODY...





NO...NO... THIS CAN'T
BE HAPPENING!

I - I'M NO
RELATION
TO YOU/

CHANCE BACK THERE ON THE BEACH WHEN THE RESCUERS FOUND YOU-- AND IN PARIS WHEN YOU CLAIMED THE ESTATE AND SWORE YOU WERE VICTOR MURRAIN!

A comic book illustration showing a man in a white hooded cloak standing in a dark, industrial setting. A speech bubble above him reads "VICTOR De MURRAIN." The man is looking down at a smaller figure in the foreground. The background features large, dark, rectangular structures, possibly parts of a ship or industrial machinery. The style is typical of mid-20th-century comic book art, with bold lines and a limited color palette.

YOU ARE IN THE MURRAIN
FAMILY BURIAL VAULT. THAT
COFFIN AWAITS THE BODY OF
VICTOR De MURRAIN.

ALL OF THE DE MURRAINS ARE BURIED HERE... AND YOU ARE VICTOR DE MURRAIN BY YOUR OWN CHOICE!



NO! / YOU KNOW I'M NOT VICTOR! I'M HUBERT NEWTON! I DON'T BELONG HERE.

WORD CAME TO US IN THE GREAT BEYOND THAT ANOTHER OF THE DE MURRAINS WOULD JOIN HIS ANCESTORS IN THE WORLD OF THE DEAD. THIS COFFIN WAS PREPARED FOR HIM. IT SHALL NOT REMAIN EMPTY!



TELL THEM I'M NOT VICTOR! YOU SAW HIM... BACK THERE ON THE BEACH! THEY'VE ALREADY BURIED HIM! TELL THEM!

I CANNOT TELL THEM VICTOR DE MURRAIN IS ALREADY BURIED... BECAUSE THE EARTHLY RECORDS STATE THAT THE MAN BURIED WAS HUBERT NEWTON! IT WAS YOUR DECISION THAT HUBERT NEWTON SHOULD LEAVE THE WORLD AND THAT YOU WOULD ACCEPT THE FATE OF VICTOR MURRAIN!



NO! NO!

TAKE AWAY YOUR HAND... IT PARALYZES ME! I CAN'T MOVE! I CAN'T THINK!



EVERYONE MARVELED AT THE GENEROSITY OF COUNT VICTOR DE MURRAIN WHEN HE PAID FOR THE BURIAL OF A POOR NIGHT CLUB SINGER IN THIS FRENCH CEMETERY.

I'LL HAVE THE BODY TAKEN UP! I- I'LL HAVE IT MOVED TO THE MURRAIN BURIAL VAULT IN THE CASTLE!



THOSE WHO FORGE THEIR NAMES ON THE BOOK OF FATE CANNOT ERASE THAT WHICH THEY HAVE WRITTEN. THERE CANNOT BE TWO VICTOR DE MURRAINS... ONE WALKING THE EARTH, AND ONE LYING IN A COFFIN IN THE FAMILY VAULT!

Y-YOU'RE NOT GOING TO MAKE A CORPSE OUT OF ME JUST BECAUSE I'M WEARING A DEAD MAN'S NAME!



I'M STILL ALIVE... AND I'M GOING TO STAY THAT WAY! YOU SAID YOURSELF THAT IT WASN'T TIME FOR ME TO DIE... AND THAT WHAT WAS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF FATE COULDN'T BE CHANGED!

FOOLISH MORTAL! DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN CHEAT FATE!



SUDDENLY, AS HUBERT RAN TOWARD THE GATES, A TREMENDOUS EXPLOSION ROCKED THE CEMETERY.

LE GRAPICE

GAS MAIN RUNNING BENEATH CEMETERY EXPLODES IN FREAK ACCIDENT!

Body of Count De Murrain found in wreckage! The Count escaped death in a recent plane crash and the body of Hubert Newton, a victim of the same accident, whose burial was generously paid for by the Count, was found in a coffin nearby. Mr. Newton will be reburied, and Count De Murrain's body will be taken to the ancestral castle in Maurienne for interment. The Count's presence in the cemetery at the time of the explosion cannot be explained.

NO/NO/ THEY CAN'T DO THIS TO ME/ I'M NOT DEAD/ BUT-- BUT THAT HORRIBLE POWER OF YOURS KEEPS ME FROM MOVING OR SPEAKING. THAT-- THAT BODY THEY ARE CARRYING AWAY IS THE MAN WHO BELONGS IN THIS COFFIN!

NO, HUBERT/ THIS IS YOUR COFFIN, YOUR GRAVE. YOU YOURSELF PUT YOUR OWN NAME UPON IT!

BY SUPERNATURAL POWER THE BODY OF VICTOR WAS BLOWN OUT OF THAT COFFIN AND THE SAME EXPLOSION HURLED YOU THERE TO YOUR LAST RESTING PLACE. THE REAL COUNT DE MURRAIN WILL BE BURIED WHERE HE BELONGS-- WITH HIS ANCESTORS.

BUT I AM ALIVE YET, IT IS NOT TIME FOR ME TO DIE! RELEASE ME FROM THIS DREADFUL SPELL SO THAT I CAN LET THEM KNOW I LIVE. IF-- IF EACH MAN'S DESTINY IS FOREORDAINED-- THEN I CANNOT DIE NOW!

IT WAS WRITTEN UPON YOUR PAGE IN THE BOOK OF FATE, HUBERT, THAT YOU HAD TWENTY MORE YEARS OF LIFE. BUT BECAUSE YOU DARED TAMPER WITH YOUR OWN DESTINY, YOU WILL LIVE IN THE COFFIN BENEATH THE TOMBSTONE ON WHICH YOU WROTE YOUR OWN NAME UNTIL DEATH RELEASES YOU AT THE ALLOTTED TIME.

NO... NO... I AM ALIVE/ I AM ALIVE/

THE FULFILLMENT OF DESTINY IS INEXORABLE AND FAIR, HUBERT. NO MAN MAY LEAD ANOTHER'S LIFE. IN DEATH-- AS IN LIFE-- YOU AND VICTOR MUST HAVE THE IDENTITY ASSIGNED YOU. YOU ARE THE ONE WHO ASSIGNED A GRAVE TO THE IDENTITY OF HUBERT NEWTON!

AS THE WORKMEN PLACED THE STONE BACK ON HUBERT'S GRAVE.

THE EXPLOSION BLEW THE PIECE OF THIS STONE OFF THAT HAD THE DATE OF DEATH ON IT.

THE CORRECT DATE WAS WRITTEN LONG AGO. HUBERT NEWTON COULD NOT CHANGE IT!

HUBERT NEWTON
BORN AUG. 6, 1887
DIED

The MYSTERY of the TAROT



CAN A MAN'S FATE LIE IN THE TURN OF A CARD? IN THE GYPSY TRADITION, THE TAROT DECK OF CARDS STANDS AS A SYMBOL OF THE UNIVERSE. THE SEVENTY-EIGHT CARDS ARE THE LOOSE LEAVES OF A UNIVERSAL MAGIC BOOK, FOREVER BEING SHUFFLED IN ORDER TO REGAIN THEIR RIGHTFUL SEQUENCE. NO MAN KNOWS WHEN THE STRANGE SYMBOLS ON THE TAROT CARDS CAME INTO BEING. THEY ARE THE OLDEST CARDS KNOWN, AND FOR THOSE WHO CAN READ THEM THEY ARE AN EYE OPENER TO THE FUTURE, A RITE OF DEMONIC SCIENCE, A THIN BUNDLE OF PASTEBOARD STRIPS POSSESSED OF AN INEXPLICABLE POWER. BUT LET US LOOK AT TIM MONCURE, WHO DID NOT BELIEVE IN FATE---OR THE STRANGE WARNING OF THE TAROT.

TIM MONCURE AND HIS WIFE MARIA WERE MARRIED WHEN THEY WERE SEVENTEEN AND BOTH WERE WORKING IN A POTTERY FACTORY IN PENNSYLVANIA. THEN TIM DISCOVERED A NEW PROCESS FOR MAKING EARTHEN-WARE, AND NOW, AT TWENTY-FIVE, WAS A SUCCESSFUL "SELF-MADE" MAN WHO HAS "OUTGROWN" HIS WIFE.



I TOLD YOU I DIDN'T WANT YOU SITTING UP WAITING FOR ME ANY MORE! I'M SICK OF SEEIN' YOU AND THOSE GOOFY CARDS!

OH, TIM!



YOU'VE BEEN OUT WITH THAT GIRL AGAIN--- THAT NIGHT CLUB GIRL. AND I SAW IN THE CARDS--- OOWWWWWW!

I TOLD YOU I DIDN'T WANT TO HEAR ANY OF THAT STUFF! IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU, YOU'LL MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!





BUT, TIM-- I'M YOUR WIFE/ IF-- IF I HADN'T HELPED YOU, YOU NEVER WOULD HAVE DISCOVERED THAT PROCESS. I-- I HAVE A RIGHT--

OH, YEAH/ THE ONLY RIGHT ANYBODY HAS IS WHAT THEY CAN TAKE/



IF YOU'RE SMART, MARIA, YOU'LL GET OUT. MY LIFE HAS CHANGED. I'M A BIG-SHOT NOW, AND YOU JUST DON'T FIT INTO THE PICTURE.

TIM / PLEASE!



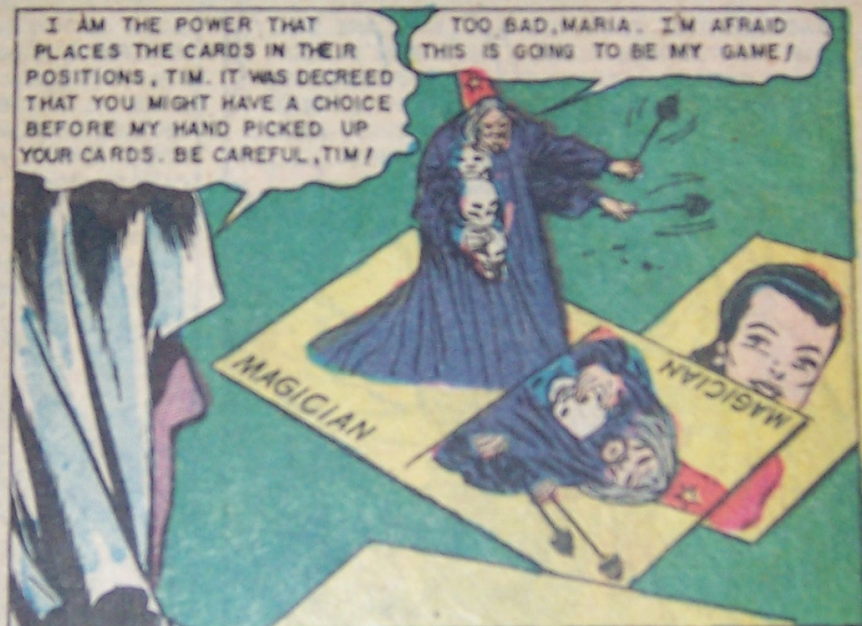
TIM--IN SPIKE OF THE WAY YOU'VE CHANGED-- I--I STILL LOVE YOU/ I'VE GOT GYPSY BLOOD IN ME, TIM-- YOU'VE ALWAYS KNOW THAT-- AND THE FORTUNE THAT FALLS FROM THOSE TAROT CARDS OF MY MOTHER'S NEVER FAILS/ THAT'S WHY I WANT TO WARN YOU--

BETTER LISTEN TO HER, TIM



DO YOU THINK I BELIEVE THAT STUFF/ A GUY THAT'S DONE WHAT I'VE DONE DOESN'T NEED ANY CARDS TO TELL HIM WHAT TO DO/ I'LL MAKE MY LIFE JUST THE WAY I WANT IT TO BE/

TIM/DON'T/IL BAGATTO-- THE "MAGICIAN" TAROT --WAS THERE IN YOUR FORTUNE-- AND ONLY MY CARD STOOD BETWEEN YOU AND EVIL/ IF MY CARD GETS OUT OF PLACE, THE TAROT CARDS SPELLED DESTRUCTION FOR YOU!



I AM THE POWER THAT PLACES THE CARDS IN THEIR POSITIONS, TIM. IT WAS DECREED THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE A CHOICE BEFORE MY HAND PICKED UP YOUR CARDS. BE CAREFUL, TIM!

TOO BAD, MARIA. I'M AFRAID THIS IS GOING TO BE MY GAME!



ARE YOU TRYING TO SCARE ME, YOU STUPID LITTLE DOPE/ WELL, THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE/ ARE YOU GOING TO GET OUT OF MY LIFE OR AM I GOING TO HAVE TO PUT YOU OUT/

I'M YOUR WIFE, TIM/ WE BELONG TOGETHER/ YOU NEED ME!

SHE'S RIGHT, TIM. IT IS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF FATE. YOU BELONG TOGETHER.



I'VE HEARD MY VOICE AND FELT MY RESTRAINING HANDS, BUT HE WOULD NOT HEED THEM.

FOR A MINUTE I COULDN'T GET TO YOU -- SEEMED LIKE SOMEBODY OR SOMETHING WAS BETWEEN US--AND SOMEBODY ELSE WAS TALKING. BUT YOU ASKED FOR THIS--AND YOU'RE GETTING IT/ I TOLD YOU TO GET OUT-- AND YOU WOULDN'T.

AND NOW I STEP IN!

MARIA AND I BOTH TRIED TO
SAVE YOU, TIM. NOW YOU WILL
SEE HOW THE CARDS OF YOUR
FORTUNE FALL WITH MARIA
OUT OF THE DECK.



THERE! I'VE BURIED YOU AND
ALL YOUR CRAZY CARDS WITH
YOU-- AND NOBODY'S GOING TO
LOOK FOR YOU HERE IN THIS OLD
CLAY PIT. HEY--WHERE'D THAT
CARD COME FROM?



EEEEEEK! I DON'T REMEMBER
SEEING A CARD LIKE THIS IN HER
LOUSY DECK!



THROUGH THE CENTURIES
MANY PEOPLE HAVE ADDED
THEIR OWN DESIGNS TO
THE TAROT CARDS, TIM.
THAT IS THE ONE YOU
DESIGNED.



WHO ARE YOU!
WHERE'D YOU
COME FROM? HOW
LONG HAVE BEEN
SNOOPING AROUND
HERE?

I AM KNOWN BY MANY NAMES--
FATE, FORTUNE, DESTINY, KISMET--
WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?
I AM HE WHO DEALS THE CARDS
YOU ARE TO PLAY IN THE GAME OF
LIFE! AND IF YOU PLAY THOSE
CARDS WRONG, TIM MONCURE,
OR SEEK TO DESTROY THEM OR
THROW THEM AWAY--THEY BECOME
THE OBJECTS OF YOUR OWN
DESTRUCTION.



THAT SCREWBALL
LINE WON'T
SAVE YOU, BUD!
YOU'VE SEEN
TOO MUCH--AND
I'M NOT TAKING
ANY CHANCES!

THE CARDS ALWAYS
RETURN TO THE DECK,
TIM.

IT WENT
RIGHT THROUGH
HIM!

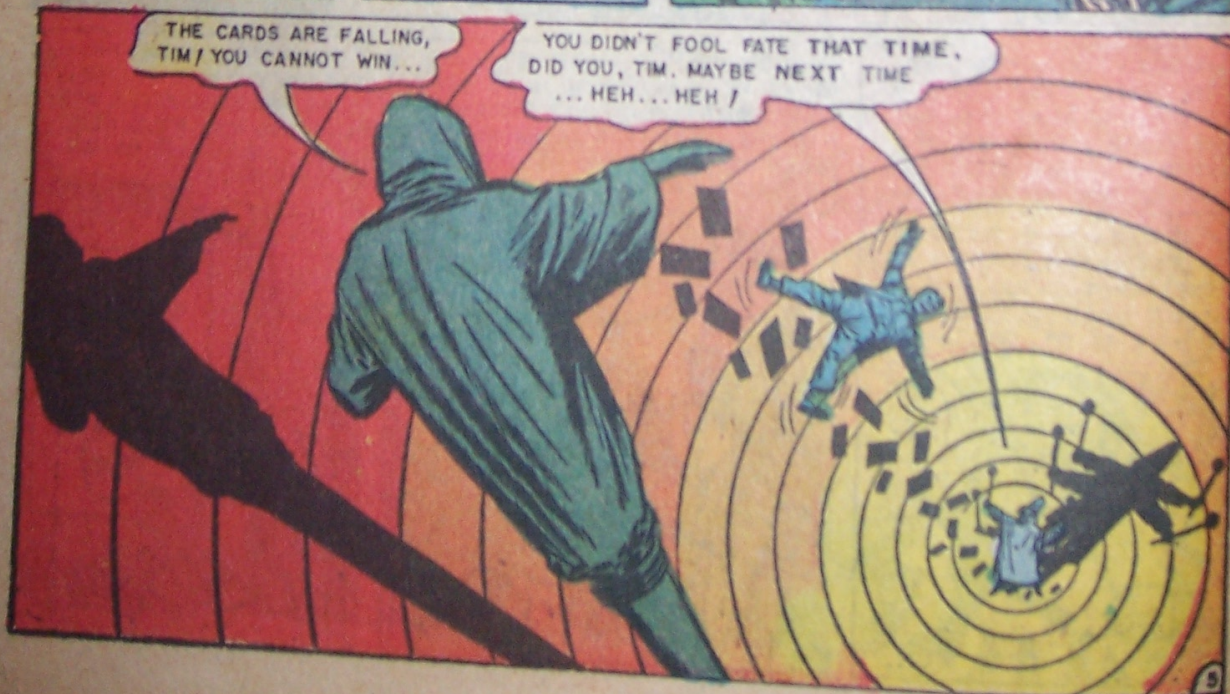


I--I'M GOING NUTS! BUT IT'S JUST
MY IMAGINATION. I--I'LL BE ALL
RIGHT WHEN I SEE DAUPHNE
AGAIN AND HAVE A DRINK!



YOU CANNOT
ESCAPE THE CARDS
OF YOUR FORTUNE,
FOOL!







W--WHERE AM I?
H--HOW DID I GET HERE?

POOR YOUNG MAN / I FOUND YOU HERE. PERHAPS SOMEONE HIT YOU OVER THE HEAD OR THREW YOU OUT OF A CAR!



EVERYTHING-- EVERYTHING IS CRAZY / LIKE A NIGHTMARE. I--DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.

THE CARDS WILL KNOW / THE SEVENTY-EIGHT MYSTIC SYMBOLS OF THE TAROT CARDS. WE WILL SEE. HOW THEY FALL --- SEE WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS!



YOU HAG OF THE DEVIL! MOCK ME, WILL YOU? THOSE CARDS BROUGHT ALL THIS ON ME!

MY CARDS!
MY CARDS!



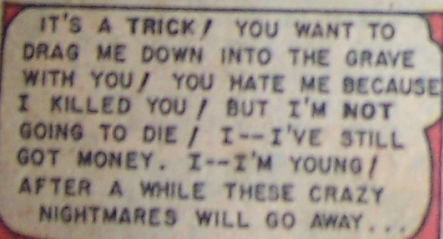
I'LL FIX YOU AND YOUR CARDS LIKE I FIXED MARIA!

I AM MARIA, TIM...



I---NO---NO--- YOU CAN'T BE--- MARIA--- I KILLED HER---

BUT YOU DIDN'T KILL MY LOVE, TIM / ONCE WE WERE HAPPY. WE WORKED TOGETHER, DREAMED TOGETHER / I BEGGED FOR THIS CHANCE TO COME BACK / I THOUGHT I COULD MAKE YOU UNDERSTAND!



IT'S A TRICK / YOU WANT TO DRAG ME DOWN INTO THE GRAVE WITH YOU / YOU HATE ME BECAUSE I KILLED YOU / BUT I'M NOT GOING TO DIE / I--I'VE STILL GOT MONEY. I--I'M YOUNG / AFTER A WHILE THESE CRAZY NIGHTMARES WILL GO AWAY...



MARIA'S LOVE WAS STRONG ENOUGH TO BRIDGE THE GRAVE. SHE CAME BACK HOPING TO SAVE YOU--- AND ASKING NOTHING FOR HERSELF. SHE THOUGHT IF ONCE AGAIN SHE COULD GIVE YOU A GLIMSE OF THE FUTURE YOU MIGHT CHANGE. BUT STILL YOU FIGHT AGAINST THE CARDS, STUPID MORTAL. AND NOW I HOLD THE LAST CARD.



RING OF EVIL

NADA CHENIER WAS A MAID AT CASTLE OSTROG NEAR BRUGES, BELGIUM, WHEN SHE HEARD THE GOSSIP ABOUT FABULOUS JEWELS BURIED WITH THE BODIES OF THE OSTROG ANCESTORS IN THE FAMILY BURIAL VAULT. SHE PERSUADED HER SWEETHEART, ANTON TONNELIER, WHO WAS ONE OF THE CASTLE GARDENERS, TO HELP HER STEAL THE JEWELS. NADA KNEW THAT THE JEWELS WERE SUPPOSED TO CARRY A CURSE, BUT SHE WAS YOUNG, GREEDY AND AMBITIOUS. AND SO, NADA CHENIER LAUGHED AT SUPERSTITIONS AND BRAZENLY CHALLENGED FATE---WHOSE LAWS ARE FIXED, AND WHOSE DECISIONS ARE INESCAPABLE!



I—I HEARD A VOICE / IT SPOKE OUR NAMES! LOOK—A FIGURE—A GHOST!

NO, ANTON / I AM NOT A GHOST / I AM THE VOICE OF ALL THAT HAS BEEN AND ALL THAT WILL BE / I AM FATE / MY WILL OPERATES IN THE LIVES OF ALL MEN!



YOU WHO DARE LAUGH AT SUPERSTITIONS, OR DARE DENY THE POWER OF EVIL INFLUENCES TO AFFECT THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO COME UNDER THEIR WICKED SPELL, ARE FOOLISH INDEED!



ONLY FATE KNOWS THE SECRET OF THE EVIL TERROR THAT LURKS IN TOMBS, AND OF THE OMINOUS CURSES THAT SHOULD REMAIN BURIED FOREVER!

IT'S A TRICK, ANTON!



HE'S SOMEBODY WHO OVERHEARD OUR PLANS / HE'S AFTER THE STUFF HIMSELF / THAT'S WHY HE'S HERE... HE'S TRYING TO SCARE US OFF / DON'T LET HIM GET AWAY WITH IT!

FOOLISH ONES / I HAVE COME TO WARN YOU ABOUT THE RING OF THIER!



SEE / HE KNOWS ABOUT THE RING / HE KNOWS IT'S WORTH A FORTUNE / SMACK HIM WITH THE PICKAX, ANTON, BEFORE HE PULLS A GUN ON US AND GETS AWAY WITH EVERYTHING!

I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT, NADA / THE DIRTY CROOK!



THE RING OF THIER WAS FASHIONED BY AN EVIL POWER WHEN THE EARTH WAS YOUNG / SUCH THINGS SHOULD NOT BELONG TO MORTALS / THOSE WHO HAVE DEFIED MY DECREE THAT ITS EVIL SHOULD REMAIN BURIED AND IMPOTENT HAVE ALWAYS REGRETTED THEIR FOOLHARDINESS!



WHA...? IT WENT RIGHT THROUGH HIM! I—I DON'T UNDERSTAND!

THERE IS MUCH YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND... BUT HEED THIS WARNING! FATE HAS MARKED FOR DESTRUCTION ALL THOSE WHO POSSESS THE RING OF THIER / THOSE WHOSE BONES ROT HERE COULD TELL YOU THIS!





HE--HE ISN'T REAL,
NADA / HE'S SOMETHING
OUT OF THIS WORLD /
I--I'M AFRAID /

YOU COWARDLY
FOOL / NO ONE
CAN SCARE ME /
I'LL SHOW HIM /



W--WHERE IS HE?
HE--HE'S GONE / HE
MUST HAVE DODGED
MY LANTERN /

NO! / NO! / THE
LANTERN WENT RIGHT
THROUGH HIM, JUST AS
MY PICKAX DID / AND NOW
WE HAVEN'T ANY LIGHT--
EXCEPT--NADA /--LOOK /
THAT COFFIN / IT'S
GLOWING /



THE COFFIN'S SO OLD THAT THE VIBRATIONS
CAUSED BY THE PICKAX AND LAMP HITTING
THE WALLS MUST HAVE SHAKEN THE TOP
LOOSE / THAT'S THE SKELETON OF OLD
PRINCE OSTROG--AND THAT'S THE FABULOUS
RING OF THIER /

I WARN YOU--
LEAVE IT ALONE /



THEY ARE BOTH TOO
ENTRANCED TO HEAR MY
VOICE / STUPID MORTALS /
YOU ARE SEALING YOUR
OWN DOOM--AND YOU
KNOW NOT WHAT HORRORS
AWAIT YOU /

I'VE NEVER SEEN
ANYTHING LIKE IT /
KIND OF TAKES
YOUR BREATH AWAY /
AND CLOSED UP
THERE WITH A LOT
OF CRUMBLING
BONES--UGH /



THAT'S WHAT I TOLD YOU /
WHY SHOULD THE DEAD HAVE
ALL THIS WHEN WE CAN
LIVE LIKE ROYALTY ON WHAT
IT WILL BRING US / GRAB
ALL YOU CAN--STUFF YOUR
POCKETS--AND THEN WE'LL
GET OUT OF HERE QUICK /



NADA / LOOK / C--CRAWLING
THINGS--COMING OUT OF
THE BONES /



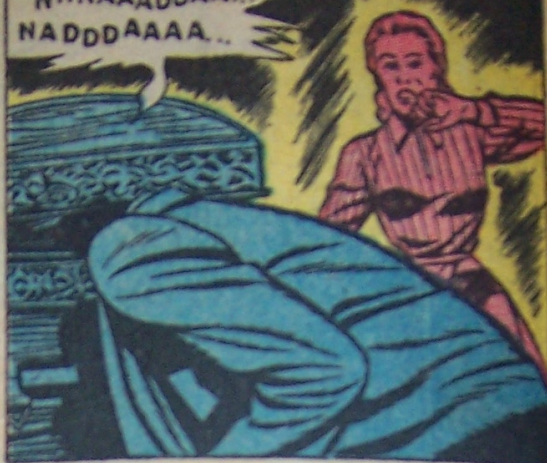
CLOSE THE COFFIN
QUICKLY / SHUT THOSE
HORRIBLE THINGS IN /

NADA / I--
I'M SLIPPING...
I--



OHhhh... WHAT SHALL I DO? I CAN'T OPEN IT AGAIN AND SEE THOSE HORRIBLE THINGS / NOT EVEN FOR ANTON... OR... OR THE JEWELS!

'NNNAAADDAA...
NADDAAAA...



I CAN'T STAND HEARING ANTON'S CRY OF AGONY... AND I CAN'T HELP HIM... THOSE HORRIBLE THINGS MIGHT GET ME! I-I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE. OH... THE RING... IT FELL FROM THE SKELETON'S HAND!



OH, WONDERFUL... WONDERFUL... I'VE GOT THIS MUCH ANYHOW!

NNNAADDDA
HELLLLpppp...



WITH ANTON'S AGONIZED CRIES STILL RINGING IN HER EARS, NADA FLED FROM THE BURIAL VAULT...

THOSE TERRIBLE CRIES / SOMEONE IS BOUND TO HEAR THEM. THEN WE'LL BOTH BE CAUGHT!



ANTON WAS SWEET, BUT HE WAS PRETTY MUCH OF A FOOL SOMETIMES! I'VE GOT THE RING NOW, AND THERE ARE PLENTY OF PEOPLE WHO'LL PAY ALL KINDS OF MONEY FOR IT AND KEEP THEIR MOUTHS SHUT! I'LL BE ABLE TO HAVE THE THINGS I'VE ALWAYS WANTED!



YOU AGAIN! IF YOU THINK YOU CAN TAKE THIS RING FROM ME, YOU'RE CRAZY! I WON'T GIVE IT UP!

THE RING WAS MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU THAN THE MAN YOU PROFESSED TO LOVE! YOU MIGHT HAVE SAVED HIM AND SAVED YOURSELF, BUT YOU LEFT HIM TO HIS DOOM AND NOW YOU ARE HEADED TOWARD YOUR OWN!





IT IS STILL NOT TOO LATE, NADA! RUN TO THE CASTLE AND GET HELP FOR ANTON. THEN RETURN THE RING TO THE COFFIN OF PRINCE OSTROG!

YOU FOOL! DO YOU THINK I'M STUPID ENOUGH TO PLAY INTO YOUR HANDS LIKE THAT?



YOU'D LOVE TO HAVE ME GIVE UP THE RING SO YOU COULD GET IT, AND THEN TRAP ME IN THERE! IF I GOT HELP FOR ANTON, THEY'D KNOW WE TRIED TO ROB THE TOMB! I'M NOT THAT DUMB! IT'S ANTON'S TOUGH LUCK THAT HE SLIPPED LIKE A CLUMSY OX!

IT WAS ANTON'S BAD LUCK TO LINK HIS DESTINY WITH YOURS, NADA!



YOU'VE HAD YOUR LAST CHANCE, NADA. YOU CANNOT RUN FAST ENOUGH TO ESCAPE THAT WHICH IS ABOUT TO OVERTAKE YOU!



THAT NIGHT, NADA HID IN A DESERTED BARN. SHE COULD HARDLY WAIT UNTIL THE FIRST LIGHT OF DAWN TO LOOK AT HER TREASURE.

OH, IT'S GORGEOUS! I'LL GET TO PARIS SOMEHOW AND SELL IT THERE. THEN I'LL REALLY BEGIN TO LIVE.



THERE'S WRITING INSIDE HERE... IT SAYS, THIER-- CAPUT MORTIUM----



E E E E K K K K K!
WHAT... WHAT'S THIS!

I AM THIER! WHOEVER POSSESSES THE RING, POSSESSES ME!



WHATEVER YOU COMMAND, I SHALL DO! ASK... AND I SHALL BRING YOU YOUR HEART'S DESIRES!

I-I DON'T BELIEVE IT! IT'S CRAZY!





UGGGHHHH... WHAT'S THIS!
IT'S THE SAME NASTY CREATURES
THAT WERE IN THE COFFIN!



THEY ARE MY PETS,
MADAMOISELLE. WHOEVER
OWNS THE RING OF THIER
AND COMMANDS ME, MUST
ALSO ACCEPT MY PETS!



GO AWAY / GET
OUT! I DON'T WANT
YOU OR YOUR PETS...
OR THE RING...
EEEEEEK!
IT WON'T COME
OFF!

ONLY IN
DEATH...
DOES THE
RING OF
THIER LEAVE
THE FINGER
OF THE ONE
WHO WEARS IT!



I--I CAN'T GET AWAY FROM THEM!
THEY'RE EVERYWHERE! IF
ONLY ANTON WAS HERE
TO HELP ME!

ANTON IS
DEAD, NADA!
YOU LEFT HIM TO
DIE AS HORRIBLY
AS YOU MUST
DIE!



I--I CAN'T STAND
THIS! THESE HORRIBLE
THINGS! I WOULD RATHER
DIE, TOO! I--I SHAKE
THEM OFF--BUT MORE
COME---

IT IS THE CURSE
OF THE RING,
NADA. THIER
WILL BRING YOU
ALL THE THINGS
YOU WANT--BUT IT
CANNOT REMOVE THE
EVIL THAT YOU DO NOT
WANT. IF YOU ACCEPT
ONE THING, YOU MUST
ACCEPT BOTH. YOU
MADE THE CHOICE!

UNABLE TO REMOVE THE
RING, NADA RUSHED OUT
OF THE HOUSE AND RAN
FRANTICALLY ALONG THE
PARIS STREETS TOWARD
THE SEINE.



HORRIFIED ONLOOKERS SAW THE
FIGURE OF A GIRL PLUNGE INTO
THE RIVER--AND MANY WONDERED
AT THE STRANGE GREEN STREAK
THAT SEEMED TO GO DOWN
BESIDE HER.



AEEEEEE!
IT--IT'S STILL
FOLLOWING ME!



NADA CHENIER LEARNED THAT
NO ONE ESCAPES THE HAND OF
FATE. SHE IS AT REST NOW--
AND THE RING OF THIER,
SLIPPING OFF OF HER FINGER
IN THE WATER, NOW RESTS AT
THE BOTTOM OF THE SEINE.
LET ANYONE WHO SEEKS TO
FIND IT REMEMBER THE DOOM
OF THE GIRL WHO SCOFFED
AT THE STORY OF ITS
EVIL POWER!

THE END

A Hand of FATE Mystery

#15

MANY STRANGE TALES OF VODOO MAGIC HAVE COME FROM THE ISLAND OF HAITI. THE WEIRDEST OF THESE STORIES TOOK PLACE IN 1932 WHEN TWO YOUNG AMERICAN TOURISTS, LED BY A NATIVE GUIDE, VENTURED INTO THE JUNGLES ONE NIGHT TO WITNESS A FORBIDDEN ZOMBIE SEANCE. . .

THERE IS A LEGEND THAT IF AN OUTSIDER WATCHES THESE FORBIDDEN RITES, HE, TOO, WILL BECOME ONE OF THE "LIVING DEAD"!

NONSENSE! THAT IS JUST SUPERSTITION. WE'VE COME A LONG WAY TO SEE THIS SPECTACLE.



SOON THE THREE MEN WERE HIDDEN ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF A JUNGLE CLEARING. . .

LOOK AT THOSE POOR DEVILS! THEY LOOK DEAD TO ME!

THEY ARE MEN WITHOUT SOULS! WE MUST LEAVE BEFORE THE RITES BEGIN!



THEY HURRIED AWAY FROM THE CLEARING, BUT ONE MAN STAYED BEHIND. . .

WHERE IS YOUR FRIEND? IF HE REMAINS THERE, HE IS IN DANGER!

I'M GOING BACK FOR HIM!



BUT THEY WERE TOO LATE! THE MAN WAS ALREADY INDUCTED INTO THE RANKS OF THE WALKING DEAD. . .

GOOD HEAVENS! THEY'VE GOT HIM!

THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO NOW!



THEY WAITED UNTIL THE AWESOME RITUALS WERE OVER, AND THEN WENT TO THE RESCUE OF THEIR UNFORTUNATE COMRADE. . .

FRED, WAKE UP! WE'RE YOUR FRIENDS! WAKE UP!

WE CANNOT HELP HIM NOW. HE IS NOT IN OUR WORLD. HE IS A... ZOMBIE. . .!



THE "DEAD" MAN WAS TAKEN BACK TO HIS HOME AND PUT UNDER THE BEST OF MEDICAL CARE, BUT NOTHING COULD BRING HIM BACK TO REALITY. TO THIS DAY THE MAN REMAINS A LIVING "DEAD" MAN. THE STRANGE CURSE OF THE VODOO HAD WORKED ON THE YOUNG AMERICAN. ANOTHER UNEXPLAINED INCIDENT IN THE RECORDED FILES OF THE STRANGE AND SUPERNATURAL.

A Hand of FATE Mystery

#16

THE BURNING SANDS OF THE SAHARA DESERT HAVE TAKEN MANY LIVES IN ITS LONG HISTORY. THE STORY OF ONE WHO ESCAPED DEATH AT THE HANDS OF THE MERCILESS WASTELAND IS AN ALMOST UNBELIEVABLE ONE. IN 1884, TWO FRENCH ARCHAEOLOGISTS LOST THEIR WAY ON THE DESERT. . .



WE'VE BEEN WALKING FOR HOURS, PAUL. ARE YOU SURE THERE IS A WATER HOLE AROUND HERE?

YES, HENRI. WE MUST KEEP LOOKING. WITHOUT WATER WE CANNOT LAST LONG.



AFTER FRUITLESS HOURS OF HUNTING IN THE HOT SUN THE TWO MEN WERE NEAR COLLAPSE. . .

WE MUST SPLIT UP TO LOOK FOR THIS WATER HOLE! YOU GO THAT WAY, BUT ONLY FOR A MILE. I WILL GO A MILE THE OTHER WAY. WE WILL MEET BACK HERE!



LATER. . .

I... CAN'T GO ON / NO WATER IN SIGHT. . . AAAHH. . .



HENRI LAPSED INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS. BUT A FAMILIAR VOICE SOON AROUSED HIM. . .

HENRI, GET UP / I FOUND WATER / I WILL LEAD YOU TO IT!

HENRI FOLLOWED HIS FRIEND ACROSS THE BURNING SANDS. ONLY THE STEADY ENCOURAGEMENT OF HIS COMRADE'S VOICE KEPT HIM ALIVE DURING THE AGONIZING TREK. SOON THEY REACHED WATER. AS HE STARTED TO DRINK. . .



WHAT IS HAPPENING? PAUL. . . HE IS FADING AWAY / ARE MY EYES DECEIVING ME?

HENRI COLLAPSED INTO A HEAVY SLEEP. A FEW HOURS LATER A CARAVAN STOPPED AT THE WATER HOLE AND HENRI WAS RESCUED. HE INSISTED THAT THEY LOOK FOR HIS FRIEND, AND AFTER HOURS OF SEARCHING THEY FOUND HIM MILES FROM THE WATER HOLE, DEAD / HENRI WAS BEWILDERED. HOW COULD A DEAD MAN HAVE LED HIM TO WATER? TO HIS DYING DAY HE COULD NOT FATHOM THE STRANGE OCCURRENCE OF A SPIRIT COMING FROM THE BEYOND TO SAVE HIS LIFE. ANOTHER WEIRD TALE IN THE ANNALS OF THE SUPERNATURAL.

BRIDE OF THE DEVIL!

The fires of Hades were at a low ebb. The gargoyle, ghouls, and imps danced and pranced, screamed and howled. Someone had made a mistake. Someone had forgotten to present Satan with his new bride for that decade! They crawled and slunk towards His Satanic Majesty sitting on his throne of black bone. "Almighty One", they quavered. "Forgive us! We did not calculate properly. The Witches Brew has not been stirred to stinking evil!" The slit-like eyes of Satan opened with irritated aplomb. "Get ye hither, fools! Can I not have a moment's rest without the pack of ye blundering the machinations of Hades?" The scorched walls of his palace reverberated with the thunder of his horrendous voice.

"Bah!" Satan screeched. And the creatures and half-shapes slunk ever deeper into the gloom. "I'll attend to it myself! Come along so that ye may witness and know forever more your duties in the future, fools!"

To the Room of Souls, Satan went and consulted the gigantic cobwebbed tome containing yellowed pages of eternal Time, etched with blood of the Doomed. "Ah!" Satan muttered darkly to Himself. "Here is the right bride for me! She has been coming along nicely, I see!"

"Prepare the cauldron, slaves!" He roared. "Set the fire. Pour the Mind-Brew! Stir the concoction!" He thundered. "Y-Yes, Master!" squawked the nightmarish monsters. Seconds later, sparks shot out of the foul-smelling, sulfurous mixture and all drew back to see what the Devil would do. Satan reached for a vial, flipped back the lid, and shook two drops of blueish liquid into the bubbling vat. "A dash of greed for my bride! And now we shall see!" he gloated. His laughter goaded the flames ever higher, and as a wall of roaring conflagration covered the brew, Hades disappeared out of sight.

• • • • •

Lydia Carnot was young and cunning. She was also the most beautiful girl in the small village of Sattol in Transylvania. Handsome Paul Lengois cradled her in his arms as they stood in the courtyard of her modest house. "But why can't we be married, darling? You've given me every possible excuse, but the right one!" "Because I—I don't want to, Paul", Lydia replied. "It isn't you exactly—You know I've always liked you since we were children—but I want nice things, nice clothes, jewelry—wealth!"

"Enough!" Paul cried. "I see now why you lied to me and let me make a fool of myself in front of everyone! You have only used me to meet the Count—that old, repulsive toad!" Lydia clutched at her throat and tried to look nonchalant, and failed miserably. She was guilty—guilty as sin. Paul continued. "You knew I was his gardener. Now I see! You're evil, Lydia—evil!"

"But oh, so beautiful, young man!" Both whirled around to see old Count Reyaud walking slowly towards them from the street. "Lydia and I have decided to marry!" rasped the bloated old nobleman. "Her beauty for my money—a winning combination—No? Ha, ha, ha..." That laugh was like a knife in Paul's heart. Without another word, he turned and stalked off, leaving Lydia to gloat inwardly to herself. "Soon—the old goat will be dead—and soon his gold shall be mine!"

The fires of Hades subsided a second time. Satan reached for the second vial while his creatures howled and screamed in fiendish delight. "Now we see, Master! Now we understand for ourselves!" "SILENCE!" lashed out Satan. "This requires concentration. Now I shall pour in a drop of jealousy! Ah—it is done!" The flame from the cauldron rose—rose until it reached the ceiling, and Hades melted into the molten lava of misery. . . .

• • • • •

Three years had passed in the Village of Sattol, and Lydia was now the Countess Reyaud. But something almost imperceptible had occurred—something evil—yet insidious! Her beauty was fading—gradually, as inevitably as day merges into night. And the old Count still had not died. Instead he grew stronger—even younger-looking. "Heh, heh", he would cackle. "I do think I shall outlast even you, my dear!" Lydia shuddered at the thought of death. She hadn't planned it this way. What had gone wrong? Paul was married and happy with his new wife. The villagers hated her, but she hadn't cared at first—but now with her beauty dimming—it was too much! And mockeries of mockeries—the old Count had found a new plaything—a new beauty to while away his time—and Lydia was jealous—yes! She was jealous enough to kill—but not jealous enough to hate! Day after day she would watch her husband being helped down the stairs to his horse by the servants.

"I'm going riding, my dear. Don't wait up for me!" "Riding!" She spat when he had left.

"Hmmpff! He is flirting with that vacuum-eyed daughter of the store-keeper! I'll fix him—wait—just wait!" But she never did. For she did not hate him yet.

The fires of Hades now mounted higher—higher until the very rafters smoked and twisted with burning fury. Satan and his minions howled once more, howled, and raved, and ranted, pausing only long enough to wipe tears of blood from their bulging eyes. "The brew is turning color, Master!" cried one noxious ghoul. "It is becoming black-black-black!" agreed an imp. "It stinks, smells, suffocates!" confirmed the third half-shape. "So be it!" spoke Satan. "It is time for our last vial—the vial of *hate*!" The drops trickled into the bubbling fluid and transformed into a golden hue of shimmering loveliness—but a loveliness that was tinged with the sting of Death! Satan laughed loud and long, for he knew now that the end was near. And the flames of the cauldron rose in an all-sweeping canopy of reddish chaos that portended disaster!

* * * * *

Lydia looked at herself in the mirror. She was *ugly*! There was no use denying it to herself much longer. Her body was dying just as her beauty had died long ago. There was no cause for it—no logical reason. But the world needed no reasons to take away what it had given to its children . . . life! She saw the Count stagger downstairs to greet his guests. She saw them all welcome him with respect mixed with hidden contempt. "The old fool is well-nigh invulnerable to age! He must drink that goblet of wine! He must!" Lydia thought. And through the crack of her door she watched the guests partake of the nourishment that their munificent host has set out in front of them.

"Here's to real beauty, my friends!" spoke the Count. "Here's to life, and youth, and laughter! Here's to love and eternal Spring!" His guests roared with appreciation. They drained their cups, and their glasses, and their goblets of all the wine contained within. They wiped their mouths politely, and watched while their host drained his own goblet. The hours sped by, and the tandles melted into the supports. Finally, it was time to go. All stood up, but one. The Count sat in his chair. He would never get up again. He was dead—cold, stone dead!

Lydia flew down the stairs when they called her. She cried, she tore her raven-black hair, she rent her beautiful embroidered clothes, she mourned—oh—she acted with perfect wifely loyalty—and inside she laughed. For she had poisoned her husband because she had learned to hate. He would never divorce her now as he had threatened last night. He would never eye another pretty young thing—he would never anger her again—never forever!

She sat in her attorney's office, wiping tears of wretchedness from her sun-red eyes. The Count had left her his fortune. "He was a good man! He was a very good man to me!" she husped. "I-I loved him—despite his years. I never suspected that his heart would fail him!" Nor did anyone else. Nor was there any autopsy or examination. They buried him quickly—for the dead are not welcome in the world of the living. Now Lydia had what she wanted—security, money, a name. She should have been very happy—except for one thing—she had lost her beauty!

Three short months later, the servants left her to herself in the huge mansion—for her temper had kept pace with her loss of beauty. No one liked her. All hated her, as she had learned to hate her husband. Her attorneys took advantage of her. And soon her fortune was squandered on poor ventures and bad investments. The mansion fell into disrepair until the very wood rotted and crumbled to the weed-choked ground below. The children and dogs of the village mocked her, taunted, sniggered, and threw mud at her. Her nails grew long and dirty—her hair matted and became scraggly. She lost weight—and gained shrewdness—lost kindness and gained selfishness. There was nothing left for her in the village of Sarrul.

So she built the hut in the mountains—away from the hand of Man. The wood screamed with pent-up fury. The trees bent and whispered. And the mountains moaned back in ominous reply. "Watch, they called me—and Watch I shall become," uttered a hideous Lydia Carnot. "I shall be the Witch of Sarrul—known and feared far and wide for her evil potions!"

She stirred her brew of cat tails, and black herbs, until the smoke poured forth an oily mist. Lightning and thunder flashed from the heavens above, and rain pelted the charred wood of her wind hut. "Dust to dust—and ashes to ashes—that be my vow—that I be a Witch!" she shrieked. My Lord and Master—Dark Angel—His Mighty Majesty Satan—*Make me a Witch!*

And then came the knock—knock—knock. And the door swung open with Satan and his minions behind him, waiting with outstretched hands—waiting with leers and jeers—waiting with gloating triumph for the woman that had once been human, to embrace them. Suddenly, it came to Lydia that she wanted to live! She screamed—it was too late! Satan enfolded her to his bosom and spread his shaggy wings, flapping with whirling crescendo back through the flames of Hades. And Lydia began her first reign as a witch—began her first second of existence as a doomed soul—because now she had become the **BRIDE OF THE DEVIL!**

THE END

The DOOM of the Lucky Devil

GET RID OF SPIKE, LUCKY, AND WE CAN HEAD WEST TOGETHER. MAYBE WE CAN SET UP OUR OWN GAMBLING JOINT IN NEVADA AND GET INTO THE BIG MONEY.

NOW YOU'RE TALKING, CORA! WE'LL BLOW TOWN AT MIDNIGHT. THEN THERE WON'T BE ANY SPIKE TO STOP YOU!



THEY CALLED HIM "LUCKY" DANIELS BECAUSE OF HIS ABILITY TO GET OUT OF SCRAPES. LUCKY DIDN'T BELIEVE IN WORKING. IT WAS TOO EASY TO MAKE A LIVING AT BLACKMAILING, GAMBLING, THIEVERY AND CONFIDENCE GAMES. LUCKY BRAGGED THAT THE DEVIL LOOKED AFTER HIM. BUT THE ALL-SEEING EYE OF FATE IS SLEEPLESS. NO TIME OR PLACE IS IMMUNE FROM HIS SURVEILLANCE... AND PUNISHMENT FOR THOSE WHO DEFY HIM IS INEVITABLE.

LATER, AS LUCKY LAY IN WAIT FOR THE UNSUSPECTING SPIKE...

YOU HAVE MUCH TO ANSWER FOR ALREADY, LUCKY. DO NOT ADD MURDER TO THE LIST!

HEY! WHAT THE...?

WHAT KIND OF A NUT ARE YOU, SNEAKING AROUND DRAPED IN A SHEET? AND HOW DO YOU KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT MY BUSINESS? I'VE GOT A WAY OF HANDLING WISE GUYS--- EEEEEKKK! THERE'S NOTHING THERE!

YOU'RE MISTAKEN, LUCKY. YOU CAN NEITHER ESCAPE ME NOR DESTROY ME.







I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S BEHIND THIS-- BUT THE GOLD IS STILL HERE AND ITS REAL ALL RIGHT! I'M NOT WORRYING ABOUT THE REST!

NO, LUCKY-- LET IT ALONE! THERE'S SOMETHING FUNNY ABOUT ALL THIS! I'M FRIGHTENED!



THESE WERE MEN A MINUTE AGO-- BUT NOW THEY'RE CRUMBING BONES! AND-- AND THAT FUNNY LOOKING GUY THAT TRIED TO STOP YOU JUST DISAPPEARED!



IT TAKES MORE THAN BONES TO SCARE LUCKY DANIELS AWAY FROM GOLD! THERE MUST BE A MILLION BUCKS WORTH HERE! FROM NOW ON WE'RE ON EASY STREET!

HEY, LOOK-- THIS OLD MAP WAS IN THE BAG-- AND THERE IS SOMETHING WRITTEN ON IT. IT SAYS, "SKIRT THE DRY RIVER BED, OLD ROAD LEADS TO DEVIL'S CAMP IN SHADOW OF DEVIL MOUNTAIN. OLD MINE PRODUCES GOLD, SILVER, PLATINUM AND VANADIUM."



SO THERE'S MORE WHERE THIS CAME FROM! THAT'S FOR US! HELP ME DUMP OUR LOOT IN THE CAR, BABY, AND WE'LL TAKE A LOOK AT DEVIL'S CAMP. THAT'S DEVIL MOUNTAIN AHEAD.

I'M NOT TOUCHING THAT STUFF, LUCKY. THERE'S SOMETHING CREEPY ABOUT THIS WHOLE SETUP!



SINCE WHEN DID YOU GET SO FUSSY! WITH A FORTUNE LIKE THIS I CAN GET ANY DAME I WANT... AND I'VE NO TIME TO WASTE COAXING YOU TO BE REASONABLE!

LUCKY... PLEASE... YOUR SCRUPLES CAME TOO LATE, CORA. YOUR DOOM WAS SEALED WHEN YOU CHOSE THE LIFE YOU DID-- AND A MAN LIKE LUCKY DANIELS!



THE BLOW FROM THE HEAVY BAG OF GOLD KILLED CORA INSTANTLY. LEAVING HER BODY WHERE IT FELL, LUCKY LOADED HIS GOLD AND DROVE OFF, EAGERLY SEEKING MORE FORTUNE.

SHE ASKED FOR IT-- AND SHE GOT IT! SHE DIDN'T KNOW WHEN SHE WAS LUCKY! WHY, WITH ALL MY LUCK, I'LL BET I'VE FOUND THE WAY TO A LOST MINE THAT WILL MAKE ME THE RICHEST GUY IN THE WORLD!

THE DEVIL IS WAITING FOR YOU, LUCKY.



LUCKY FOLLOWED THE DIRECTIONS ON THE OLD MAP AND REACHED DEVIL'S CAMP.

AN OLD DESERTED GHOST TOWN! NOW ALL I HAVE TO DO IS FIND THE MINE!



AS LUCKY PULLED UP IN FRONT OF THE OLD SALOON HE REALIZED THE TOWN WAS NOT AS DESERTED AS HE HAD THOUGHT...

EEEEKKKK! WHAT KIND OF CREEPS ARE THESE!

WELCOME TO DEVIL'S CAMP, LUCKY. NICE OF YOU TO BRING BACK OUR GOLD.

YOUR GOLD / HOW DO YOU GET THAT WAY / AND -- AND HOW DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THE GOLD ANYWAY -- AND HOW DID YOU KNOW MY NAME?

HEH... HEH... WE ALWAYS KNOW WHEN ANOTHER ONE ENTERS OUR RANKS, LUCKY. IT'S THE GOLD -- IT ALWAYS COMES BACK / IT BELONGS HERE!

DUTCH NICK AND INDIAN PETE MURDERED EVERYONE IN DEVIL'S CAMP AND ESCAPED WITH THE GOLD THEY FOUND! BUT THE GOLD ALWAYS RETURNS.

AIEEE... I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE!

OH, NO, LUCKY! YOU MUST COME IN AND HAVE A DRINK -- AND MEET THE OWNER OF THE MINE. THE GOLD REALLY BELONGS TO HIM.

STAY AWAY FROM ME / ... LET ME GO / UHHHH...

THERE'S TOO MANY OF THEM -- ARGHHH!

PERHAPS NOW YOU WILL BEGIN TO REALIZE THAT YOUR LUCK RAN OUT WHEN YOU REFUSED TO HEED MY WARNINGS. YOUR EVIL DEEDS ARE CATCHING UP WITH YOU AT LAST, UNLUCKY DANIELS!

THE SPECTRES DRAGGED LUCKY THROUGH THE DOORS OF THE SALOON...

HERE HE IS MASTER!

I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, LUCKY! WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR A LONG TIME, HAVEN'T WE? YOU ALWAYS GAVE ME CREDIT FOR LOOKING AFTER YOU -- AND I STILL AM, LUCKY / HEH... HEH...

OTHERS LIKE YOU FOUNDED THIS TOWN AND NAMED IT AFTER ME / BUT SOMEHOW THEIR LUCK NEVER LASTED -- AND THEY NEVER FOUND WHAT THEY WERE SEEKING. HOWEVER, THEY FOUND OTHER THINGS -- HEH... HEH / MANY OTHER THINGS.



ENJOY YOURSELF, LUCKY, WITH THE REST OF MY CREATURES. THE WORLD THINKS THIS IS A LONG-ABANDONED GHOST TOWN--BUT AS YOU CAN SEE, IT IS VERY GAY AND LIVELY /

UGHH / IT'S HORRIBLE! MAKE THEM LET ME ALONE /



YOU CAN'T KEEP ME HERE WITH THESE CRUMBLING HORRORS /

YOU MEAN YOU DO NOT LIKE OUR COMPANY, LUCKY? HOW TRAGIC. BECAUSE YOU ARE ONE OF US NOW.



IT'S A LIE / ONE-OF THIS CREW / NOT ON YOUR LIFE / THEY'RE DEAD / AND-- AND YOU--DON'T EVEN EXIST!



MY CAR / I--I'VE GOT TO GET AWAY. I'VE STILL GOT THAT GOLD--IT'S ENOUGH FOR ANY MAN / I WAS A FOOL TO COME LOOKING FOR THIS TOWN AND THE MINE.



BUT AS LUCKY STARTED TOWARD HIS CAR, HE SAW . . .

THOSE TWO GUYS COMING FROM MY CAR / THEY'VE GOT THE GOLD / WHY--WHY THEY'RE THE TWO WHO WERE FIGHTING OVER IT IN THE DESERT /



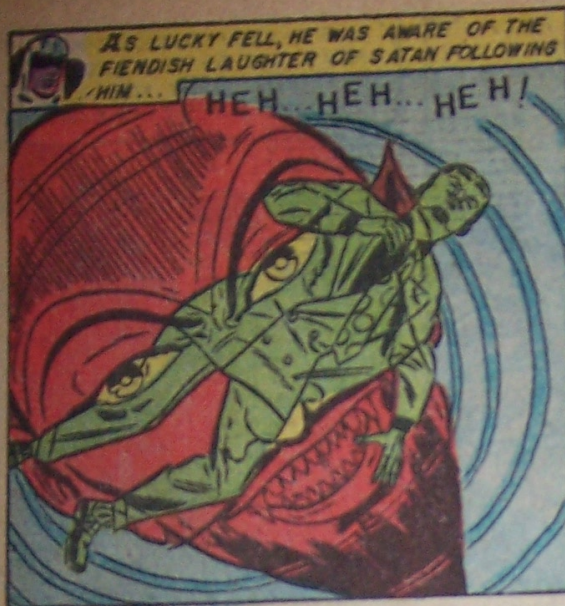
THEY ARE DUTCH NICK AND INDIAN PETE, LUCKY. THEY ARE DOOMED TO FIGHT OVER THE GOLD IN DEATH JUST AS THEY DID IN LIFE... THEY NEVER REALLY POSSESS THE GOLD THEY MURDERED TO OBTAIN. THE GOLD REMAINS A TRAP FOR FOOLS LIKE YOU.

THEY--THEY CAN HAVE THE GOLD / AS LONG AS I GET AWAY--



BUT AS LUCKY RUSHED TOWARD HIS CAR, THE EARTH BENEATH HIS FEET SUDDENLY GAVE AWAY . . .

BUT YOU WON'T GET AWAY, LUCKY / YOU WERE LOOKING FOR THE OLD MINE, WEREN'T YOU? AND NOW YOU'VE FOUND IT / PEOPLE HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR THE LAST FIFTY YEARS FOR THAT OLD MINE SHAFT -- HEH / ...HEH / ...AND IT WAS JUST YOUR LUCK TO FALL THROUGH IT /



BLACKHEADS PET HATE"

Men, Girls Choosing Date

"Black" is the blackhead . . .
and girls popular
about dates!
"Nobody's date
that's said of
blackheads.
Blackheads
N'T look good
in close-up
So can you
"Sure, I meet
at first glance
glance, I see dingy blackheads, it's good
night!"

Or can you blame the girl who confesses, "I hate to go out with a fellow who has blackheads. If he's careless about that you're sure he'll embarrass you in other ways, too!"

But you — are YOUR ears burning? Well, you've company and, sad to say, good company. There are lots of other-wise attractive fellows and girls who could date anyone they like if they'd only realize how offensive blackheads are . . . and how easily and quickly they could get rid of them . . . if they want to!

"He-Man" Often Guilty of Blackhead Crime

Take your "he-man" . . . super at track, games, sports of all kinds . . . who thinks that after just a shower he's ready to go anywhere! And won't the girls all admire his muscles!

Sure they would! But not many dance floors are set up for hurdle races! You can't show off your snappy left hook when my cokes are in the ring. The "he-man" who's also clean-cut, will get the breaks wherever he is.

Even Cute Girls Become Careless

Easy, too easy, for a girl to think that if he has the latest in clothes and hair-do he needn't bother about blackheads. A little more make-up, she guesses, will take care of that. BUT MAKE-UP WON'T HIDE BLACKHEADS! Not unless it's a layer of paris, maybe! And even good make-up "slips" at a dance! So don't take chances, cute though you may be!

TAKE THESE TIPS TO BANISH BLACKHEADS

Keep skin clean by washing morning and night with warm, almost hot, water. Use good soap and plenty of it. And finish with cool water.

Extract every blackhead as soon as you see it—with a SAFE extractor. Don't use finger nails. Don't squeeze. That may mean infection, injured tissues, a marred skin.

Just be clean! Be quick! And be safe! That's easy! And that's ALL!



FELLOWS! GIRLS!

Keep Skin Clear and Clean!

UGLY BLACKHEADS OUT in Seconds with VACUTEX

NEW! SCIENTIFIC! VACUUM ACTION!

Amazing new VACUTEX is painless . . . safe . . . fast! In seconds you are rid of those ugly blackheads that clog the pores . . . make your skin look grimy and dingy . . . give others such a wrong impression of you. VACUTEX creates a gentle vacuum pressure around the blackhead, which attracts it—quickly!—without inflicting any tender skin times. Keep skin clear with this new scientific way. Without painful squeezing. Without dangerous infection from dirty fingers! Just place VACUTEX over blackhead and draw with extractor. Blackhead's out! Simple! But you'll be delighted by your instantly improved appearance. Others will notice your clearer, cleaner skin! Try VACUTEX—now!



ACTUAL
LENGTH
3 1/2"

RUSH
COUPON
NOW!

10 DAY
TRIAL OFFER

Don't send a penny. Mail coupon and pay postman only \$1.00 plus postage, or save all postage by enclosing \$1.00 with guarantee coupon. If not thrilled to be rid of embarrassing hated blackheads this new quick way—just return VACUTEX in 10 days and get \$1 back. Order today!



No Squeezing
No Infection
No Injury
to Skin
Tissues!



Just place VACUTEX over blackhead—release extractor—and blackhead's out!

10 DAY TRIAL GUARANTEE

BALLCO PRODUCTS COMPANY, Dept. 23
19 West 44th St., New York 36, N. Y.
☐ Enclosed find \$1.00. Send me VACUTEX postpaid.
☐ Ship C.O.D. I will pay postman \$1.00 plus postage.
My dollar will be refunded if I am not delighted.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

SORRY NO C.O.D. OUTSIDE OF U.S.A.

Magic Dutch Rock Garden Grows in 4 DAYS



only
\$1.00

Grows
in 4 Days
Lasts for months
in any season

Boys & girls, here's exciting news. News about something entirely different! Now, you can grow a real garden of your very own—right in your own home. Yes, here's an amazing

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You get all these items—you don't need anything else. Plenty of Magic grass seeds . . . Magic soil. Lovely flower seeds . . . Practical, attractive container . . . Bright colored metal butterflies. Little Dutch boy and girl . . . American Flag . . . Parasol that opens and closes . . . simulated rocks. Cute ceramic dog . . . Many other exciting features.

magic garden you set up and plant yourself in a few minutes. Grow real grass and flowers in just a few days! You'll thrill to the magic of Mother Nature as you watch the grass sprout and the flowers take root and grow right before your eyes. In no time at all you'll have a colorful, healthy garden—and what a kick you'll get playing gardener, cutting the grass, watering the plants, and tending the lovely sweet-smelling flowers. You can even clip a beautiful bunch of flowers for mom, or friend. All your friends will wonder how you were able to make things grow—They'll all want you to show them how!

Winter-Summer,
Spring or Fall
Grow grasses green
and flowers tall.

Over a hundred square inches of garden — Special wishing pool in the center — An American flag and pole — Two attractive butterflies that look like they're flying — Your own container. Just look at the list!

For Boys and Girls
of All Ages

Here's a beautiful garden all your own for just a single dollar bill. You'll have hours of fun. You'll surprise your family and friends with what you have and what you can do.

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Rush my Magic Dutch Rock Gardens on approval for only \$1.00. If I am not completely satisfied I may return it for prompt refund of full purchase price.

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☐ I enclose \$1.00 for my garden. You pay postage. Same money back guarantee.

